

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 00368 101053Z

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PGOV, NI

SUBJECT: STATUS OF US NEWSMEN IN NIGERIA

REF: STATE 3022

1. AP CLOSING ITS OFFICE HERE FOR ECONOMIC REASONS. ORGANIZATION HAS TOLD USIS IT TOO DIFFICULT OBTAIN ADEQUATE OFFICE AND LIVING ACCOMODATIONS FOR ITS REPRESENTATIVE AND COSTS TOO HIGH GENERALLY TO WARRANT CONTINUED OPERATIONS. LOCAL STRINGER OPERATION WILL BE SUBSTITUTED. FOR SIMILAR REASONS, AFP HAS ALSO HAD SECOND THOUGHTS IN PAST MONTHS ABOUT KEEPING THEIR LOCAL OFFICES RUNNING. AFP ALMOST SHUT DOWN TWO MONTHS AGO OVER LEASING EXPENSES.

2. VOA CORRESPONDENT ROBERTS CALLED IN FOR QUESTIONING BECAUSE HE, BY LOCAL STANDARDS, WAS PARTICULARLY AGGRESSIVE IN PROBING AND REPORTING ASPECTS NIGERIAN-ANGOLA POLICY ABOUT WHICH FMG SENSITIVE--ESPECIALLY REGARDING MILITARY AID TO MPLA. SHOULD BB NOTED THAT IN MISSION'S VIEW ROBERTS PERFORMANCE AND CONDUCT

HAVE BEEN THOROUGHLY PROFESSIONAL.

3. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, OBTAINING NIGERIAN VISA TO RESIDE AND WORK IN COUNTRY HAS BEEN DIFFICULT PROPOSITION FOR SOME TIME. PROBLEM HAS BEEN EXACERBATED IN CASES INVOLVING NON-GOVERNMENTAL CONNECTED JOURNALISTS REGARDLESS THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION. ALL OF REPRESENTATIVES AP, AFP, REUTERS PRESENTLY

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PAGE 02 LAGOS 00368 101053Z

IN LAGOS EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTIES GETTING APPROPRIATE VISA STAY

HERE TO WORK. LAST ATTEMPT NYT OBTAIN VISA ENDED WHEN "TIMES" WITHDREW REQUEST EARLY IN USUAL LAGOS MINISTRY REVIEW PROCESS. ADMITTEDLY, LAST APPLICATION WITHDRAWAL CAME AFTER FMG REPORTEDLY ADVISED "TIMES" IT UNLIKELY VISA FOR NEW LAGOS BASED CORRESPONDENT WOULD BE GIVEN BUT THAT ADVICE DELIVERED SOON AFTER NEW FMG CAME TO POWERE AND NEW OFFICIALS WERE CAUTIOUSLY FINDING THEIR WAY INTO THEIR JOBS. PREVIOUS NYT CORRESPONDENT HAD HIS VISA PROBLEMS SEVERAL YEARS AGO, TOO.

4. "WASHINGTON POST" CORRESPONDENT APPLICATION IS DIFFERENT SINCE IT CALLS FOR ONLY ONE MONTH STAY. SO FAR THIS APPLICATION WOULD APPEAR TO BE VICTIM USUAL LENGTHY BUREAUCRATIC DELAY. IN LATEST MOVE, EMBASSY, IN RESPONSE MEA REQUEST, FORWARDED CURRICULUM VITAE ON DE YOUNG TO MINISTRY LAST WEEK. WE NOT AWAIT WITH INTEREST BUREACRACY'S NEXT MOVE.

5. THE REPRESENTATIVES OF PRAVDA, ISVESTIA, RADIO MOSCOW TASS, NOVOSTY (APN), AND NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY OPERATING (ALSO EAST GERMAN ADN) HERE UNDER THEIR RESPECTIVE EMBASSIES. (SEE USIS LAGOS FIELD MESSAGE 20, JULY 18, 1975. IN THEIR CAPACITY AS OFFICIALS, FOREIGN REPS THESE ORTANIZATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN EXPOSED TO ECONOMIC AND OR VISA WORRIES TO WHICH PRIVATE PRESS REPS HAVE.

6. AS REPORTED VARIOUS EARLIER MESSAGES, FMG IS ENGAGED IN CAMPAIGN TO HARNESS AND USE MEDIA. THERE HAVE BEEN STRONG ELEMENTS OF CHAUVINISM IN THIS DRIVE AND IN OTHER FMG POLICY ANNOUNCEMENTS. WHILE THIS GENERAL ATMOSPHERE MAY BE CAUSING MEA TO DRAG ITS FEET LONGER THAN USUAL ON VISA APPLICATIONS, THERE NO INDICATION AMERICAN PRESS IS SUBJECT ANY SPEICAL HARRASSMENT OR DISCRIMINATION. OUTBURST OF PAST TWO WEEKS (AND ESPECIALLY DISATRIBES OF JANUARY 7) BY GOVERNMENT AND PRESS OVER U.S.-ANGOLAN POLICY, AND AGAINST SINISTERLY-SEEN U.S. INFLUENCE IN AFRICA, MAY OR COURSE RADICALLY CHANGE OFFICIAL ATTITUDE TOWARD AMERICAN JOURNALISTS.
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